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# Isle Off Africa About to Undergo a Placid Upheaval

By JOSEPH LELYVELD

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PORT LOUIS, Mauritius, June 9 —

The American image-makers hired to save the job of the venerable Prime Minister who has been in office for the last 22 of his 82 years have hurriedly decamped from this Indian Ocean island, apparently to avoid charges that they were "foreign mercenaries" recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Simultaneously, the Prime Minister's main challenger, who is 45 years younger, seems to have effectively ridiculed a last-minute effort to document accusations that he is a hireling of Libya. Thus this polyglot nation of nearly one million now seems almost certain to accomplish something when it votes on Friday that no other member of the Organization of African Unity has done for a long time, if ever before, and that is to bring off a peaceful change of government at the ballot box.

The charges and countercharges of foreign interference have helped to offset the sense of being taken for granted that came with all the think-tank theorizing about the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean and the big American military buildup on Diego Garcia, a British-owned island that Mauritius claims as part of its birthright as an independent nation.

## Relying on Hindu Vote

More will be heard of these claims in international forums and possibly even at the International Court of Justice if, as expected, the patriarchal Prime Minister, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, is swept from office by the Militant Mauritius Movement. Nearly 70 percent of all Mauritians are of Indian origin, but the language of politics and the nearest thing to a lingua franca is a Creole dialect derived from French. In its election manifesto, the opposition party promises to be fiercely non-aligned.

Sir Seewoosagur, a former physician who came to power in the pre-independence period with the support of trade unions that he subsequently lost, is now relying on the rural Hindu vote to save him from a humiliating landslide. He is also relying on charges that the opposition is controlled by "Communists" who will do away with parliamentary democracy.

"Once a Communist, you don't change," the Prime Minister said in an interview. He was talking about Paul Béranger, the 37-year-old secretary

general of the opposition party who had his political initiation in Paris in May 1968 in the student rising that briefly convulsed France.

Mainly because he derives from the nation's smallest and most privileged minority, the French mercantile and sugar-planting elite that stayed on the island and stayed French during a century and a half of British colonial rule that followed the Napoleonic wars, Mr. Béranger will not be the Prime Minister in a government led by the Militant Mauritius Movement. That role will go to Aneerood Jugnauth, a lawyer of Hindu origins who was briefly Minister of Labor in Sir Seewoosagur's Government 15 years ago before breaking on what is now being presented as an issue of principle.

At news conferences, Mr. Jugnauth typically answers questions first and then lapses into silence as Mr. Béranger amplifies and occasionally corrects his answers.

## Basic Issue Centers on Jobs

The basic promise that the Militant Mauritius Movement makes has to do not with ideology or the country's international stance but jobs. Ten thousand young people come on the job market each year and, especially in the last few years, not many of them have found work. With sugar at its lowest price in years, the Government has had little leeway in economic matters, but Mr. Béranger has sold the idea that the elimination of waste, nepotism and tax evasion can make a difference.

Sir Seewoosagur, whose office is besieged every morning by scores of young job-seekers, complains that the younger portion of the electorate is too young to appreciate all he has done over the years to create employment. "They're educated, perhaps too educated," he said with a sigh. But even though Mauritius has been remarkably successful in limiting population growth, he also had to acknowledge, "There is no house in which there is no unemployment."

The force of economic frustration has been enough to erode the ethnic basis of politics on the island. The Militant Mauritius Movement appears to draw substantial support from Creoles, Hindus and Moslems with only the small Chinese minority conspicuously missing from its ranks.

Another force undermining communal politics, it appears, is television, which is seen by most of the electorate, either in community centers or private homes. And it was here that Sir Seewoosagur's backers hoped to turn the tide,

with the help of imported expertise represented by a group headed by Joseph Napolitan, a Massachusetts consultant who ran the television side of Hubert H. Humphrey's campaign for President in 1968.

## Portrayed as World Statesman

Mr. Napolitan has introduced the freeze frame to the Indian Ocean in a series of television spots portraying Sir Seewoosagur as a world statesman. But this has only set loose a stream of charges from Mr. Béranger's party that the media men, who are now rumored to be operating from the neighboring French island of Réunion, were brought in by the C.I.A. in appreciation for the Prime Minister's relatively compliant stand on Diego Garcia.

Today an opposition publication called *Le Nouveau Militant* printed documents purporting to show that Mr. Napolitan had been hired by a Manhattan company called Public Affairs Analysts Inc., which it asserted is often used as a C.I.A. "cover."

The C.I.A. charges have helped to neutralize the impact of a set of documents in Arabic released from the Prime Minister's office on Monday, all purporting to outline undertakings Mr. Béranger had supposedly made in exchange for \$1 million for his party's campaign from Libya, long rumored to be the source of its money.

Calling the documents "crude fakes," Mr. Béranger pointed out some discrepancies in dates. He also contended that the eagle on what was supposed to be a Libyan letterhead was pointed the wrong way and noted that some of his purported undertakings — to make a Moslem head of the security services and Creole the national language — were calculated to arouse Hindu fears.

Today his party was due to present evidence of C.I.A. involvement in the election campaign but changed its mind, Mr. Béranger said, to preserve its "cordial relations" with the American Embassy. Another factor may have been the exposure of an attempt by the political editor of *Le Nouveau Militant* to forge a C.I.A. document.

At the news conference called to expose the C.I.A., Mr. Jugnauth announced that the editor had been expelled from the party.